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cause the latter were anti-Marxist and favored aid to parochial schools. Nearly all non-Socialists believed, often unenthusiastically, that Mussolini was the only realistic alternative to socialism, violence, anarchy, and parliamentary stalemate. The Fascists' promise that they would actively solve Italy's many economic, political, and social problems also contrasted well with the passivity of Liberal Italy. (Fascist activism would soon find an admirer in none other than Adolf Hitler.)

To attain power Mussolini had changed nearly all of his principles (if he ever had any), or at any rate his policies. He had begun his career as a radical Socialist, sharply at odds with the bourgeoisie, and came to power at the head of a revolt of younger members of the bourgeoisie who feared Marxism. He switched from being an antimonarchist to a royalist. He gave up his (early) antimilitarism to flatter the army. He exchanged internationalism for rabid nationalism. He changed from being the defender of civil liberties to their suppressor. He disavowed his early anticlericalism in order to curry favor with the church. He abandoned the idea of breaking up large landed estates even though just 13 percent of the rural population owned 87 percent of the land. Of Mussolini's early leftist ideology only some rhetoric remained. He proclaimed the advent of a new society but left the privileged classes untouched. But like other true believers, he discovered the most difficult thing to do was to convert from fanaticism to moderation. Depending on one's point of view, Mussolini can be described as an unprincipled, unscrupulous opportunist or as a clever politician who knew how to adapt his policies to the shifting winds of public opinion.

Mussolini was far from being a totalitarian dictator when he formed a government in 1922. In his first cabinet only four ministers out of fourteen were Fascists. The others were members of the Catholic Popular party: an admiral, a Nationalist, and a liberal philosopher. Of the major parties, only Socialists and Communists were not represented. It is true that Mussolini's position in this new government was quite strong; in addition to being prime minister, he was foreign minister, and minister of the interior. However, only the third ministry was extraordinary for an Italian head of government. The Italian Parliament gave

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